

WEEK 4

Living the Kingdom Life by Taking Care of Others according to the Spirit and by Realizing God's Forgiveness

Scripture Reading: Matt. 7:1-12; 18:1-35

OUTLINE

<< DAY 1 >>

- I. Matthew 7:1-12 concerns the principles of the kingdom people in dealing with others and reveals that the heavenly ruling over the kingdom people requires that they take care of others according to the spirit (cf. Judg. 9:8-9):
 - A. The kingdom people, living in a humble spirit under the heavenly ruling of the kingdom, always judge themselves, not others (Matt. 7:1):
 1. If we judge others with righteousness, we will be judged with righteousness by the Lord (v. 2); if we judge others with mercy, we will be judged with mercy by the Lord; mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13).
 2. For us to deal with others, we must reject ourselves and consider them, sympathize with them, and be merciful toward them; the splinter in our brother's eye must remind us of the beam in our own eye (Matt. 7:3).
 3. As long as the beam remains in our eye, our vision is blurred, and we cannot see clearly (vv. 4-5).

<< DAY 2 >>

- B. We should not give that which is holy to the dogs or cast our pearls before the hogs, lest they trample them with their feet and turn and tear us (v. 6):
 1. In Matthew 7:6 that which is holy must refer to the objective truth, which belongs to God; your pearls must refer to the subjective experiences, which are ours.
 2. Dogs do not have hoofs, nor do they chew the cud; hogs have divided hoofs but do not chew the cud; thus, both are unclean (Lev. 11:27, 7; cf. Acts 10:1-15, 28).
 3. According to the revelation in 2 Peter 2:12, 19-22, and Philippians 3:2, dogs and hogs in Matthew 7:6 refer to people who are religious but not clean.
 4. When we talk to others about the truth or about our precious experience of Christ, we must perceive and determine whether or not they have the capacity to receive

what we intend to share.

C. As we are contacting people and dealing with them, we must ask, seek, and knock for the proper way to contact them (vv. 7-8; 1 Tim. 5:1-2):

« DAY 3 »

1. To ask is to pray in a common way, to seek is to supplicate in a specific way, and to knock is to demand in the most intimate and most earnest way.
2. The best way for the kingdom people to contact others is according to the kingdom and according to the Spirit (Matt. 7:9-12; cf. Luke 11:13).
3. We need to pray ourselves into God so that we may receive the riches embodied in His Spirit to feed ourselves and all those under our care (vv. 1-13).
4. We must learn to do everything through the cross and by the Spirit in order to minister Christ into others for His Body (cf. 2 Chron. 1:10).

« DAY 4 »

II. To live the kingdom life, the God-man life, the church life, we must be humble and not despise any believer but love our brother and forgive our brother (Matt. 18:1-35; 5:48; 7:13-14; Rom. 14:17):

- A. To live the kingdom life, we must humble ourselves and become like little children (Matt. 18:2-4).
- B. To live the kingdom life, we should not stumble others or set up any stumbling block (vv. 5-9; cf. 11:6).
- C. To live the kingdom life, we should not despise even a little believer (18:10-14).
- D. To live the kingdom life, we should forgive our brother without limit (vv. 21-35):
 1. We must forgive the offending brother even seventy times seven times (vv. 21-22).
 2. We must forgive others as the Lord has forgiven us:
 - a. Our debt to the Lord is impossible to pay off (vv. 23-26).
 - b. The Lord forgave our debts in our defeated Christian life for the restoration of our fellowship with Him (v. 27).
 - c. Another's debt to us is very small compared with our debt to the Lord (v. 28).
 - d. If we do not forgive the brother who sins against us, it will grieve the other brothers, and they may bring this matter to the Lord (vv. 28-31).
 - e. If we do not forgive a brother from our heart today, we will not be allowed to enter into the kingdom in the coming age (vv. 32-35; cf. Mark 11:25-26).

« DAY 5 »

III. We must see and realize that in the kingdom of God there are five kinds of forgiveness:

A. There is eternal forgiveness—this relates to life:

1. The forgiveness that comes with our salvation is eternal forgiveness.
2. Once we are forgiven, we are forgiven forever; we receive eternal life forever, and we are justified forever (Luke 24:47; Rom. 4:7-8; Psa. 103:12).
3. The moment we believe into the Lord Jesus, we are forgiven of all our sins; the Lord removes all our sins, and we are left with no trace of sin before God (Acts 10:43; Heb. 8:12).

B. There is instrumental forgiveness—this relates to the church:

1. In sending the Holy Spirit to His church, the Lord charged the church to be His representative on the earth; forgiveness is now granted through the church (John 20:22-23).
2. Instrumental forgiveness is God's proclamation of forgiveness through man; if a person is newly saved but does not know the meaning of forgiveness, it is good for a representative of the church to stand up and say to him, "You have accepted the Lord today; you can thank Him because He has forgiven you of your sins!"

C. There is restorative forgiveness—this relates to fellowship:

1. When we sin in our daily life, our conscience condemns us, and our fellowship with God is interrupted (Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3).
2. Our Father-son relationship with God in life can never be changed, but sin can damage our fellowship with God; we have to confess our sins and offenses to God before we can secure our forgiveness in fellowship (1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2).
3. If we have offended our brothers, we must confess to them as well (Matt. 5:23-24).
4. We have to maintain ourselves in constant fellowship with God; when we come to God, we have to acknowledge our sinful acts honestly and ask Him for forgiveness; if we do this, our fellowship with God will be restored, and our heart will be filled with the joy of salvation (Psa. 51:12; Prov. 15:13a; 17:22a; 15:15b).
5. The secret of the Christian life is maintaining ourselves in constant fellowship with God; if we fail, we must ask God for forgiveness, and we must recover the sweet fellowship that we had with God (1 John 1:9).

« DAY 6 »

D. There is governmental forgiveness—this relates to discipline:

1. This kind of forgiveness involves God's arrangement, sovereignty, discipline, and hand; God's government is His way of doing things; it is His administration.

2. God's governmental forgiveness is related to the way that God manages, rules over, and deals with us (Gal. 6:7).
 3. When we sin against God, He will forgive us when we confess our sins to Him; our fellowship with Him can be restored, but He may change His way with us.
 4. David confessed his sins and admitted his guilt in order to be forgiven by God (2 Sam. 12:13; Psa. 51), but God would cause the son born to Uriah's wife to die and the sword to not depart from David's house (2 Sam. 12:7-15).
 5. When we are under God's governmental discipline, the only thing that we can do is learn to humble ourselves under His mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:5-7); the more we reject God's governmental hand, the more problems we will encounter.
 6. After Moses struck the rock in Meribah (Num. 20:10-12, 24; 27:14), he fell under God's governmental hand:
 - a. In being angry when God was not angry, Moses did not represent God rightly in His holy nature, and in striking the rock twice, he did not keep God's word in His economy; thus, Moses offended both God's holy nature and His divine economy.
 - b. Because of this, even though he was intimate with God and may be considered a companion of God (Exo. 33:11), Moses lost the right to enter into the good land.
 - c. In all that we say and do concerning God's people, our attitude must be according to God's holy nature, and our actions must be according to His divine economy; this is to sanctify Him.
 7. We must learn to be generous to others and learn always to forgive; if we criticize others lightly, condemn others easily, keep complaining about the conduct of others, and continue to count the ill-treatment that we receive from them, this will bring us under God's governmental hand; if we are severe toward others, God will also be severe toward us (Matt. 6:15; 18:23-35):
 - a. We have to learn to fear God, to revere God, to respect God, to honor God, to be in awe of God (Psa. 2:11-12; 86:11; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Isa. 11:2).
 - b. When others are in trouble, it is the time for us to help them, not the time for us to criticize them (cf. Gen. 14:14-16).
 - c. There are many brothers who have fallen miserably today for one reason only—they have criticized others too severely in the past; many of their weaknesses today are the very weaknesses that they criticized in the past.
 - d. We must be generous toward others if we want to avoid God's governmental hand; may we learn to love and forbear one another (Eph. 4:32).
- E. There is kingdom forgiveness—this relates to administration:
1. If we treat people too harshly or have an unforgiving spirit in this age, we will be disciplined in the kingdom age (Luke 6:37-38; Matt. 18:33-35).
 2. If we treat others in a mean way and criticize others mercilessly, God will deal with us in the same way in the future (7:1-2).

3. May the Lord grant us the grace to be those who show mercy to others, who do not deal with others in meanness, sharpness, or severity, so that we can obtain mercy from God in that day (5:7; cf. 2 Tim. 1:16, 18).

<< WEEK 4 — DAY 1 >>

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 7:1-2 Do not judge, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you.

The Lord's intention in Matthew 7:1-12...is to encourage us to forget ourselves and to take care of others. In the two previous chapters, the Lord has dug out our temper, our lusts, our inner being, the self, the flesh, and our anxiety. Now He brings us to the point where we must learn to take care of others. When you judge others, you must judge them according to how you want them to judge you. To consider the matter in this way is to take care of others. (Life-study of Matthew, p. 283)

Today's Reading

In Matthew 7:1 the Lord said, "Do not judge, that you be not judged." The kingdom people, living in a humble spirit under the heavenly ruling of the kingdom, always judge themselves, not others. The Lord's word about not judging lest we be judged does not seem to be a word about taking care of others. However, when we probe into this word, we see that it actually means to take care of others.

Verse 2 says, "For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you." Under the heavenly ruling of the kingdom, the kingdom people will be judged with what they judge. If they judge others with righteousness, they will be judged by the Lord with righteousness. If they judge others with mercy, they will be judged by the Lord with mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13). Do not judge others so much, for you will be judged in the same degree that you judge others. If you take care of others, you will not be judged by them.

For us to deal with others, we must consider them, sympathize with them, and be merciful toward them. The kingdom people must take care of others in their dealings with them.

The basic principle hidden [in Matthew 7:1-12] is that we must forget ourselves and take care of others. Do you know why you criticize others and judge them? It is because you think of yourself too much. You neglect the feelings of others and do not care for them. You care only for your feeling. Hence, you judge and criticize others. Therefore, if we would be kept from judging others, we must take care of them. This requires that we forget ourselves and consider others. If we center around ourselves and ignore the feelings of others, we shall criticize them. But if we take care of others, we shall not judge them.

In verse 3 the Lord says, "And why do you look at the splinter which is in your brother's eye, but the beam in your eye you do not consider?" As the kingdom people, living in a humble spirit under the heavenly ruling of the kingdom, we must consider the log, the beam, in our own eye whenever we look at the splinter in our brother's eye. The splinter in our brother's eye must remind us that we have a beam in our own eye.

Verse 4 continues, "Or how can you say to your brother, Let me remove the splinter from your eye, and behold, the beam is in your eye?" The Lord's word in verses 3 and 4 is very deep. His intention here is not to charge us to take care of ourselves; it is to charge us to take care of others.

Verse 5 says, "Hypocrite, first remove the beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye." As long as the beam remains in our eye, our sight is blurred, and we cannot see clearly. In pointing out a brother's fault, we must realize that we have a greater fault. Our brother's fault is likened to a splinter, and ours is likened to a beam....The Lord's intention is that we take care of others. Whenever you try to point out someone else's fault, you may care for the fault, but not for the person....If you care for the brother, you will not care only for his fault. Rather, you would say, "His fault is merely a splinter when compared to mine, which is a huge beam. Therefore, I am happy to overlook his fault." (Life-study of Matthew, pp. 284, 286-287)

Further Reading: Life-study of Matthew, msg. 23

« WEEK 4 – DAY 2 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 7:6-8 Do not give that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the hogs, lest they trample them with their feet, and turn and tear you. Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.

[In Matthew 7:6] that which is holy must refer to the objective truth that belongs to God, and your pearls must refer to the subjective experiences which are ours. Dogs do not have hoofs nor do they chew the cud, and hogs divide the hoofs, but do not chew the cud. Thus, both are unclean (Lev. 11:4, 7). According to what is revealed in 2 Peter 2:12, 19-22, and Philippians 3:2, the dogs and the hogs here refer to people who are religious, but not clean. (Life-study of Matthew, p. 288)

Today's Reading

Matthew 7:6 is also related to the matter of taking care of others. Many times when you have seen a certain truth, doctrine, or light, you tell others about it with no regard to whether they are “dogs,” “lambs,” or “wolves.” You care only for your feeling of excitement. You may say, “Oh, I have seen the light concerning the church life! The church is glorious and wonderful!” In your excitement, you may share this with the wrong person. This is giving what is holy to the dogs. When you are about to give something holy to others, you must consider those you are speaking to. You should not give the holy things to dogs, nor cast your pearls before hogs. When you talk to others about the holy things, or the truths, and the pearls, or the experiences, you must observe the basic principle of taking care of others. You must determine whether or not people can receive what you intend to share. You must also perceive how much they can receive. In other words, when you talk to others about spiritual things, do not speak according to your feelings or desires; rather, speak to them according to their capacity to receive what you have to say.

If you take care of others, you will not share everything with everybody, and there are some to whom you will not give your testimony. This is the principle of the kingdom people in dealing with others...You will be wise in dealing with them, considering what the “dogs” can take or what the “hogs” can understand. But if you are excited and care only for yourself and not for others, you will get into trouble or even cause trouble. In the past some of our young people have gone to other meetings, and, caring only for their zeal, they spoke out unwisely. They were on fire, but because they did not care for others, they only caused trouble.

The kingdom people must be the wisest of people. Whenever we contact others, we should know what their temperature is, and we should care for their situation. We should do things in a proper way and not provoke the dogs to bite us or the hogs to attack us. They may turn and tear us.

Verses 7 and 8 of Matthew 7...mean that we must look to the heavenly Father as we are dealing with others. We must ask Him, seek Him, and knock for Him. Many times we have failed to do this. But these verses indicate that at the very time we are contacting people and dealing with them, we must look to the Lord and say, “Lord, tell me how to contact these people. Lord, show me how to deal with them.” Sometimes simply asking will not be adequate. We must seek and even knock. This indicates that contacting people is a serious matter. Never think that it is an insignificant thing. We, the kingdom people, must approach it seriously, never doing it in a light or loose way or merely according to our feeling. Rather, we must do so by taking care of others. We must ask for a way, seek after a way, and even knock at the heavenly door for a way. Thus, we must ask, seek, and knock; then we shall have the proper way to contact people. (Life-study of Matthew, pp. 288-291)

Further Reading: Life-study of Matthew, msg. 23

« WEEK 4 – DAY 3 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 7:11 If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him!

Luke 11:13 If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father who is from heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

In Matthew 7, the proper way to contact people is according to the principle of the kingdom. In verse 11, after using the examples of a son asking for a loaf and a fish in verses 9 and 10, the Lord said, “If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him!” Because Matthew is a book on the kingdom, no doubt the “good things” in verse 11 are the things of the kingdom. However, Luke 11:13, the sister verse of Matthew 7:11, says, “If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father who is from heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” In Luke 11:13 the “good things” are changed to “the Holy Spirit.” If we put these two verses together, we see that the best way for the kingdom people to contact others is according to the kingdom and according to the Holy Spirit....As we deal with others, we must ask, seek, and knock. Eventually, we shall receive the guidance to deal with people according to the kingdom and according to the Spirit. Thus, the controlling principle for our contact with others is the kingdom and the Spirit. If our contact with others is based upon this principle, we shall not make mistakes...[and not make contacts that are] not profitable to anyone. (Life-study of Matthew, p. 291)

Today’s Reading

We all must learn to take care of others and to pray, “Lord, show me the way.” First you need to ask. If the way does not open up, then you must seek. If the way still does not open up, then you must knock. To knock means to come close to the One whom you are seeking. When you ask, there may still be a distance, but when you knock, there is no distance. Rather, you are directly in front of the One you are seeking. Thus, you need to spend time to seek the Lord. In contacting others, we need the asking, the seeking, and the knocking. Then the door will be opened, a straight way will be given to contact people, our contact will be profitable, and we shall be saved from making mistakes. We shall also know to beware of the dogs and the hogs. This is the significance of the insertion of verses 7 through 11 between verses 6 and 12 in Matthew 7.

We need to add a further word about asking, seeking, and knocking. To ask is to pray in a common way, to seek is to supplicate in a specific way, and to knock is to reach the door in the closest way. The matter of asking and receiving in verse 8 is good for the kingdom people’s prayer concerning their keeping of the new law of the kingdom. They ask for it and they will receive it. The matter of seeking and finding is good for 6:33. The kingdom people seek the Father’s kingdom and His righteousness and will find them. The matter of knocking and having the door opened is good for 7:14. The narrow gate will open to the kingdom people by their knocking. (Life-study of Matthew, pp. 292-293)

Concerning the spiritual and divine things for the church, we must keep in mind four crucial points. First, we must go through the cross. Our native flavor should be crossed out by Christ. Both the Americans and the Chinese should be crossed out. In the church there is room for no natural person, but Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:11). On the cross both the Jews and the Gentiles were crossed out. Second, everything should be by the Spirit. Third, this is to dispense Christ to others. Fourth, everything is for the building up of the church. In other words, whatever we do should be through the cross and by the Spirit to dispense Christ to others for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, “The Divine and Mystical Realm,” p. 157)

Further Reading: Life-study of Luke, msg. 27; CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, “The Divine and Mystical Realm,” ch. 6

« WEEK 4 – DAY 4 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 18:3 ...Truly I say to you, Unless you turn and become like little children, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

21-22 ...Peter...said to Him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times? Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy times seven.

Matthew 18 deals with the way we should live and act in the kingdom of the heavens: (1) we should become like little children (vv. 2-4); (2) we should not stumble others or set up any stumbling block (vv. 5-9); (3) we should not despise even a little believer (vv. 10-14); (4) we should hear the church and not be condemned by it (vv. 15-20); and (5) we should forgive a brother without limit (vv. 21-35). All this indicates that to enter into the kingdom of the heavens we must be humble and not despise any believer, but love our brother and forgive our brother. (Matt. 18:1, footnote 1)

Today's Reading

We all must learn to forgive others, something that none of us enjoys doing. Deep within our heart, we do not want to forgive others.

According to the Bible, to forgive is to forget...How difficult it is to forget an offense against us! Without the Lord's mercy and grace, we would remember others' offenses even in eternity. But when God forgives, He forgets. Hebrews 10:17 says, "And their sins and their lawlessnesses I shall by no means remember anymore."...Our Father in heaven considers us as if we have never sinned, for He has forgiven and forgotten our sins. But when we forgive an offense, we often remind others of it...Genuine forgiveness means that we forget the offense.

[In Matthew 18:22] seventy times seven means that we must forgive others an unlimited number of times. There is no need to count or keep a record of the number of times you forgive others. Over and over and over, you need to forgive them.

In verses 23 through 35 the Lord gives a parable as an illustration....The settling of accounts...refers to the Lord's dealing with us in this age...[to] cause us to realize how much we owe the Lord and to beg Him to forgive us. According to verse 24, one slave owed [a king] ten thousand talents, that is, about twelve million dollars. It was impossible for the debtor to pay off this debt. This refers to the heavy debt of our failures accumulated after we were saved.

After the slave begged the king to be patient with him until he repaid the debt, "the master of that slave was moved with compassion and released him and forgave him the loan" (v. 27). This refers to the forgiveness of our debts in our defeated Christian life for the restoration of our fellowship with the Lord.

Verse 28 says, "But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and he took hold of him and began to choke him, saying, Repay me what you owe."...The hundred denarii spoken of in this verse is less than a millionth part of ten thousand talents. This refers to a brother's sin against us after we have been saved. How small is any brother's debt to us compared to our debt to the Lord!

Nevertheless, we may not be willing to forgive. [In] verses 29 and 30...the Lord is dealing not with sinners, but with believers, with saved ones. He deals with a brother who has been offended, yet who is not willing to forgive.

Verse 31 says, "His fellow slaves, seeing what had taken place, were greatly grieved and came and explained fully to their master all that had taken place." If we do not forgive the brother who sins against us, it will grieve the other brothers, and they may bring this matter to the Lord.

Verse 34...[indicates that] if we do not forgive the brother who sins against us, we shall be disciplined by the Lord until we forgive him from the heart, that is, until we have paid everything we owe,...[which] implies that if we do not forgive a brother from our heart today, we shall not be allowed to enter into the kingdom in the coming age. (Life-study of Matthew, pp. 604, 616-618)

Further Reading: Life-study of Matthew, msgs. 51-52

« WEEK 4 – DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

Rom. 4:7 “Blessed are they whose lawlessnesses have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered over.”

John 20:22-23 ...He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you retain, they are retained.

According to Ephesians 4:32, we were forgiven by God in Christ. According to John 20:23, the disciples have the authority to forgive: “Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven.” According to 1 John 1:9, if we confess our sins, He will forgive us. According to Matthew 6:14-15, if we forgive others, God will forgive us, and if we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven. According to James 5:15, if we have sinned and we ask the elders to come and pray for us, we will be forgiven. By reading these five passages we note that they all speak of the matter of forgiveness. They also speak of five different kinds of forgiveness, not just one kind. (CWWN, vol. 46, p. 1277)

Today’s Reading

Let us call the forgiveness that comes with our salvation God’s eternal forgiveness. This is the forgiveness spoken of by the Lord Jesus in Luke 24:47: “That repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” This is eternal forgiveness. The forgiveness spoken of in Romans 4:7 is eternal forgiveness as well.

This forgiveness is called eternal forgiveness because once God forgives our sins, He forgives them eternally. God casts our sins into the depths of the sea and the abyss. He no longer sees or remembers our sins. This is the forgiveness we obtained at the time we were saved. The moment we believe in the Lord Jesus, we are forgiven of all our sins; the Lord removes all of our sins, and we are left with no trace of sin before God. This is called eternal forgiveness.

God often tells man directly, “I forgive you.” But often He declares His forgiveness through the church: “God has forgiven your sins.” Therefore, the Bible shows us another kind of forgiveness which we call instrumental forgiveness. John 20:22-23 says,

“And when He had said this, He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you retain, they are retained.” In sending the Holy Spirit to His church, the Lord charged the church to be His representative on earth. The church has become His vessel. Forgiveness is now granted through the church. This is called instrumental forgiveness....After the church receives the Holy Spirit, it has the power to retain and forgive sins. The church can declare that the sins of certain ones are retained, while the sins of others are forgiven. The church has such authority because it is under the authority of the Holy Spirit....This is a kind of indirect forgiveness. In this forgiveness God forgives men through the church; the church acts as His channel.

If a person has truly believed, you may say to him, “You have accepted the Lord today. You can thank Him because He has forgiven you of your sins!”...This is an exercise of the authority that the church has received from the Lord....Such a statement must be made under the authority of the Holy Spirit....This is the second kind of forgiveness described in the Bible. In this forgiveness, God does not forgive directly; He does it through the church. Eternal forgiveness is God’s direct forgiveness of men. Instrumental forgiveness is God’s proclamation of forgiveness through man. (CWWN, vol. 50, “Messages for Building Up New Believers (3),” pp. 667-669)

After we have become a Christian, we often fall. We know that we should not and yet we do. The sins of the past have been forgiven and yet we sin again....If we sin after we have been saved, we lose our communion with God. We are still His sons, but we cannot look into His face....As a Christian we cannot lose our life, but we can lose fellowship with God....The Word says that if we confess our sins, we will be forgiven [1 John 1:9]....This forgiveness restores our fellowship. (CWWN, vol. 46, pp. 1278-1279)

Further Reading: CWWN, vol. 46, ch. 194

« WEEK 4 – DAY 6 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 7:1-2 Do not judge, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged;...with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you.

There is another kind of forgiveness in the Bible which we call governmental forgiveness....God's government is His way of doing things; it is His administration.

When we sin against God, God will forgive us when we confess our sins to Him. However, we cannot stop Him from using other methods to discipline us. God will forgive us, and our fellowship with Him can be restored, but He may change His way with us. A man must realize that God's governmental hand is not easily removed....God will remove His governmental hand only when He has full assurance that His children are doing the right things....Governmental forgiveness is absolutely different from eternal forgiveness, instrumental forgiveness, and forgiveness in fellowship. Governmental forgiveness is related to the way God manages, rules over, and deals with us. (CWWN, vol. 50, pp. 672-674)

Today's Reading

To understand the significance of governmental forgiveness,...consider the example of David...with Uriah's wife. David committed two sins: adultery and murder....David confessed his sins after his mistakes. He felt the shame, the defilement, and the offense that he had committed against God....His fellowship with God was restored after his confession in Psalm 51.

God had already put away David's sins, but He would cause the son born to Uriah's wife to die and the sword not to depart from his house [2 Sam. 12:10-14]....In other words, sins may be forgiven but the discipline does not go away immediately.

Our God is a God of government. He will not move His governmental hand immediately away from those who have sinned against Him. Often, God does not do anything; He lets us go. But as soon as He stretches forth His governmental hand,...the only thing we can do is to learn to humble ourselves under His mighty hand. The more we humble ourselves under His mighty hand and give up all resistance, the easier it is for God to lift His governmental hand. The more we refuse to humble ourselves, and the more angry, vocal, or indignant we become, the more difficult it is for God to lift His governmental hand.

After Moses smote the rock in Meribah (Num. 20:10-12), both he and Aaron fell under God's governmental hand. (CWWN, vol. 50, "Messages for Building Up New Believers (3)," pp. 677-680)

In being angry when God was not angry, Moses did not represent God rightly in His holy nature, and in striking the rock twice, he did not keep God's word in His economy....Thus, Moses offended both God's holy nature and His divine economy. Because of this, even though he was intimate with God and may be considered a companion of God (Exo. 33:11), Moses lost the right to enter the good land.

In all that we say and do concerning God's people, our attitude must be according to God's holy nature, and our actions must be according to His divine economy. This is to sanctify Him. (Num. 20:12, footnote 1)

Learn to be generous to others and learn always to forgive. If you keep complaining about the conduct of others and continue to count the ill treatment you receive from them, please bear in mind that this will bring you into God's governmental hand....If you are severe toward others, God will also be severe toward you.

You must learn to be kind, loving, and generous to your brothers. Give others liberty in many things. Stop all idle talk and criticism. When others are in trouble, it is the time for us to help them, not the time for us to criticize them.

There are many brothers who have fallen miserably today for one reason only—they have criticized others too severely in the past. Many of their weaknesses today are the very weaknesses they criticized in the past....We must be generous toward others if we want to avoid God's governmental hand! May we learn to love and forbear one another. (CWWN, vol. 50, pp. 684-686)

Further Reading: CWWN, vol. 50, ch. 40

<< WEEK 4 — HYMN >>

Hymns, #947

- 1 God's kingdom today is a real exercise,
But when Christ comes to reign, it will be a great prize;
It is wisdom divine that we now may be trained
That His plan be fulfilled and His justice maintained.
- 2 God's children, we're born to be kings with His Son,
And we need to be trained that we may overcome
And to know how to rule in His kingdom as kings,
That His kingship through us be expressed o'er all things.
- 3 Today we must learn to submit to His throne,
How to have a strict life and His government own;
His authority then we'll be able to share,
O'er the nations to rule with God's Son as the Heir.
- 4 With a life strict to self we must righteousness hold,
Kind to others in peace, and with God joyful, bold;
In the kingdom's reality e'er to remain,
For its manifestation prepared thus to reign.
- 5 Then Christ when He comes with the kingdom from God
Will to us grant His kingship to share as reward;
Thus the Lord will His righteousness through us maintain
And His wisdom to heavenly powers make plain.
- 6 For this the apostle pressed on at all cost,
For the kingdom assured that he would not be lost;
'Tis for this he charged others, "Be true to the Lord,"
That the kingdom might be unto them a reward.
- 7 O Lord, give us grace for Thy kingdom to live,
To be trained that Thou may the reward to us give;
Make the kingdom's reality our exercise,
That its manifestation may be our great prize.